THE BUDDHA AND HIS DOCTRINE

BY

C. T. STRAUSS

A popular account of the Buddha's life and doctrine in its original purity, drawn from the oldest accessible documents. The author refutes certain errors and prejudices which exist almost universally with regard to Buddhism, and presents a lucid account of Gautama's teaching and philosophy.

CONTENTS.

Preface.
The Life of the Buddha.
The Doctrine.
The Ethics.
The Brotherhood.
In Defence of Buddhism.

34
2 b

LONDON:
WILLIAM RIDER & SON, LIMITED,
8-11 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C. 4.

2-8-1

The Buddha and His Doctrine

Upper Part of a Statue, probably of Gótama Buddha when Prince Siddhátttha.

From a ruined rock temple in the Aurangabad District, Nizam's Dominions, Deccan, Western India, seventh century A.D.

The Buddha and His Doctrine

By

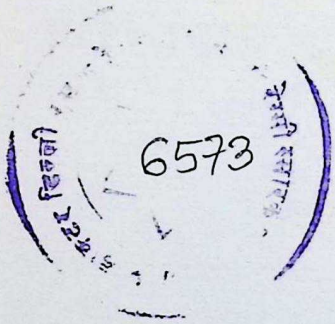
C. T. Strauss

London

William Rider & Son, Limited

8 Paternoster Row, E.C. 4

1923



294.34
STR

All Rights Reserved

The permission for translation into other languages will be given gratis, but in order to prevent several translations into the same language, permission must be obtained from the author, whose address will be furnished by the publishers.

294.34
St 82 b

Printed in Great Britain by
NEILL & CO., LTD., EDINBURGH.

PREFACE

THE aim of this treatise on Buddhism is to give a short, popular description of the Buddha's life and doctrine. Obviously it cannot fully exhaust the whole subject. It refutes some errors and prejudices which still exist very generally with regard to Buddhism. These errors have been spread by persons who either do not know the old, genuine doctrine of the Buddha or who are interested in representing it wrongly. The old, genuine Buddhism does not exist any more anywhere in its original purity, and in the land of its birth it has even entirely disappeared through persecutions by Brahmins and Mohammedans. In other countries, where it penetrated, it incorporated parts of the native religions, by which it was more or less corrupted. In order

to know the genuine Buddhism it is necessary to consult the oldest accessible documents, the Páli Tipítaka. This collection is considered trustworthy by all competent scholars, and it transmits to us without a doubt the original doctrine and in several important passages even the very words of the Buddha.

As this treatise aims at presenting a popular account of Buddhism, I have not appended references for the extracts from the Tipítaka which are given in quotation marks, but these are exact translations of the old texts, culled from the works of Rhys Davids, Oldenberg, Neumann, Ed. Hardy, Pischel, Seidenstücker, etc.

The original edition of the present work appeared in the international language Ido; in this edition some portions are amplified to facilitate comprehension. It is therefore not a literal translation, but rather a free adaptation with the Ido original as a basis.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	PREFACE	v
1.	THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA . . .	1
2.	THE DOCTRINE	25
3.	THE ETHICS	73
4.	THE BROTHERHOOD	86
5.	IN DEFENCE OF BUDDHISM . . .	93

PRONUNCIATION OF PALI WORDS

A as in father; e as in pen; i as in pin; o as in old; u as in sure; c like ch in church; g as in gold; s as in same, not as in rose; all other letters as in English; h after consonants is to be pronounced, e.g. ph as in top hat, th as in pot house. The accent is indicated by ′.

The Buddha and His Doctrine

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

THE Buddha was born about 560 B.C. The word Buddha is not a proper name but a title, like Messiah or Christ for Jesus; we therefore say *the* Buddha. The meaning of the word is the Awakened, the Enlightened One. His personal name was Siddhátta, his family name Gótama, and he belonged to the clan of the Sákyas. His contemporaries called him Gótama, his adherents the Buddha. He called himself generally the Tathágata, a word which literally signifies "thus gone," i.e. like his predecessors, but which is generally rendered "the Perfect One."

A full account of his life does not exist, for his adherents cared principally for his doctrine; but there exist many particulars with regard to his life in the collection mentioned in the Preface, so that it is possible to compile a fairly good though short biography.

It is therefore certain that the Buddha lived, and we know where and when he lived. The old reports in the holy books of the Buddhists are corroborated by other contemporaneous writings, even by those of adversaries. There exist besides very old inscriptions engraved on rocks and columns, whose authenticity cannot be doubted, which prove that the Buddha lived; they also record some of his principal teachings.

Near the frontier between India proper and Nepal there was discovered a column some years ago which the emperor Asóka had erected about the middle of the third century B.C. On it there is engraved in

the writing and language of that time: "Here the Buddha, the sage of the Sákyas, was born." Near the same spot there was also found a monument made of bricks which resembled a natural hill, as it was entirely covered by shrubs. When it was examined there was discovered a receptacle made of stone in which there were several crystal vases filled with little golden ornaments in the form of leaves and swastikas, and also charred bones and ashes. On one of these vases, a particularly handsome one, there was engraved: "This is a receptacle for the relics of the sublime Buddha, a pious offering of the Sákyas, the brothers and sisters with sons and wives." All these articles—the stone receptacle, the crystal vase, the ornaments, bones, and ashes—are now in the Calcutta Museum, where the writer of these pages saw them. This discovery tends to corroborate the correctness of the above-mentioned writings, which

report that the body of the Buddha was cremated and that the remains were divided into eight parts, one of which the Sákyas received. They erected a monument for the preservation of the relics, as did also the other seven recipients. A similar monument was discovered in the south of India near Madras, and one in north-west India near Pesháwar. The Buddha certainly was no sun myth, as some European scholars tried to prove before the discovery of these monuments and relics. He was a human being, and as such he is honoured in all Buddhist countries, and not as a god or demi-god, but as an extraordinary, noble, and sublime character.

The Buddha was born in a grove called Lúmbini, near the city of Kápilavátthu, the capital of the Sákyas. His father's name was Suddhódana, his mother's Maya; she died seven days after giving birth to the Buddha. He was educated by his

aunt Pajápati, his mother's sister, Suddhódana's second wife, who later became the first woman member of his Order. In his youth the Buddha lived as the son of a princely family in great luxury. He married a princess of a neighbouring tribe, by name Yashódhara; they had a son called Ráhula, who later also entered the Order, but did not occupy a very prominent position in it—a further though indirect proof of the trustworthiness of the transmitted texts.

The legend reports that the Buddha made four excursions to a park near the city, during which there appeared to him first a decrepit old man, then a very sick one, then a corpse, and lastly a hermit. The first three incidents directed his mind to the sad lot of humanity, while the last one showed him the happiness and peace of one who has renounced the vanities of the world. The luxury and festivities of the court aroused an aver-

sion in him, and he resolved to leave all, even his wife and child, for the purpose of dedicating himself to the task of finding out the origin of suffering, and how to eradicate it from human experience. For this he needed quietness and solitude, which he could not have in his courtly surroundings. He therefore made his escape one night, accompanied only by a trusted servant, whom he sent back with a message to his family. The going forth of the Buddha from his home to this voluntary exile is called "the Great Renunciation." He was then twenty-nine years of age.

He first went to a celebrated teacher, whose system he learnt, but he was not satisfied; then he went to another, with the same result. As in the doctrine which he later promulgated there are slight resemblances to the Sánkya and Yóga philosophies, it is probable that his teachers, whose names are known,

belonged to these schools. He left them, and resolved to aspire to the highest knowledge in solitude. This was the custom in India at that time as it is to-day. It was also the general belief that it was possible to acquire enlightenment by severe asceticism. With him there were five other ascetics whom he surpassed in zeal and strength of will, so that they looked up to him as their leader. The legend reports that he went so far as to live on a single grain of rice a day. The consequence was that, instead of gaining superior wisdom, he weakened his body to such an extent that he one day swooned away. A shepherdess who happened to pass gave him some milk, so that he regained consciousness. He then saw that he was on the wrong road, and commenced eating regularly and sufficiently and left off his ultra-ascetic practices. Thereupon the five hermits left him, as they considered him an apostate. He remained

now entirely alone, but was not discouraged. He reflected deeply on the questions he had set himself to solve, and one night he suddenly acquired the certitude that he had reached his goal. He had found the "Four Noble Truths," on which he laid the foundation of his doctrine, which we call Buddhism. By this discovery he became the Buddha, the Enlightened One. Since leaving his home about six or seven years had passed, and he was therefore now thirty-five years of age.

The whole description of his search and repeated failures sounds natural enough. If the object had been to represent him as a god this report certainly would have been different—a convincing proof of the reliability of those old texts!

The tradition reports that the enlightenment took place on the night of the full moon of the month of Wesak, which

corresponds to the second half of our April and the first half of May. On this account all full moons, and particularly that of this month, are regarded as religious festivals in Buddhist countries. Those who have never been to the tropics can hardly imagine the splendour of such nights which involuntarily lead the mind to high and tranquil thoughts.

The place where the Buddha reached enlightenment is now called Buddha Gaya. There the emperor Asóka erected a temple which still exists, and which was restored some years ago. Near this temple there is a tree whose botanical name is Ficus religiosa. It is said to be the actual tree under which the Buddha sat when he reached enlightenment, but various reasons make this doubtful. A branch of the original tree, however, was planted about two hundred years later at Anurádhapúra, the then capital of Ceylon, when Asóka sent his son Mahínda and his daughter

Sánghamítta, who both had entered the Order, to Ceylon for the purpose of proclaiming the Buddha's doctrine. They were successful, for the king with his family and most of the inhabitants of the country were converted, and there, as also in Burma and Siam, Buddhism has been preserved in comparative purity. The branch which Sánghamítta brought, and was then planted there, has now become a big tree whose wide-reaching branches require support. It has been carefully tended for over two thousand years, and is therefore the oldest historical tree in the world. The writer saw both the tree at Buddha Gaya and that at Anurádhapúra, and must confess that he was deeply moved when he saw them.

But let us return to the Buddha. He remained quiet for some time, "enjoying the bliss of redemption," as the story calls it. He probably pondered deeply over his system, and thought out all its details in

order to be able to proclaim it publicly. It is reported that he hesitated at first to do so, because he doubted whether humanity would understand his doctrine, having such different views; but the thought that some might understand overcame his reluctance, and so he set forth with the words: "Opened be to all the gate of deathlessness; let him who has ears to hear come and listen!"

India then was in a high state of civilisation. Commerce and industry flourished, and we hear of many rich merchants and handicraftsmen. The leading classes were the nobles and Brahmins. The country consisted of several kingdoms, the most important of which were Mágadha and Kósala, whose kings Bimbisára and Pasénadi became zealous supporters of the Buddha. Then there were smaller principalities, such as the country of the Sákyas from which the Buddha came. There were also small republics and free

cities, in which patrician families were prominent. The Brahmins were the priests, but they had not yet reached the high position which they attained later; the nobles still claimed the first rank. It seems that the common people were in general happy and contented; we hear nothing of social unrest. Even during wars the people were comparatively little affected: the labourer attended to his work and the peasant cultivated his field; the nobles and their retainers (the warrior caste) alone fought. There was great interest in questions of a religious and philosophical nature. There was speculation about all kinds of things, but what most interested everybody was man's fate after death. As there existed the widest possible liberty of conscience and tolerance, even the existing religions were sharply criticised. There were philosophical schools of all shades of opinion, as in ancient Greece: materialists who denied

the authority of the sacred writings; followers of the Vedas; sophists who already were called slippery eels and hair-splitters; fatalists who taught that everything was predestined and that it was therefore of no importance whether one was good or bad; sceptics who doubted everything. There were disputes about free will and necessity, about the existence and continued life of the soul, about God, whom some considered impersonal, others personal. Some even made fun of the purification by water, which was regarded by the majority as highly efficacious. These said that if water had this power fishes and frogs must be most holy. Wandering teachers went from place to place followed by a number of their pupils; debates were held which all classes attended. All this shows that there was an active mental life, and that those who say that the climate of India paralyses intellectual energy are in error.

Among such conditions the Buddha commenced his mission. He thought first of the five hermits with whom he had lived and who had left him; they were then in the deer park Isipátana near Benares, and thither he first turned his steps. When they saw him approaching they resolved not to salute him nor to render him the customary attentions, for they considered him an apostate, but the nearer he came the less they could hold to their resolutions. They therefore offered him a seat and water for washing his feet. Thereupon the Buddha delivered his first discourse, which we probably possess nearly in his own words, for it has always been considered the fundamental exposition of his doctrine.[1] At first one of the five (Kondañña) declared himself converted, and soon he was followed by the other four. On the spot where "the wheel of righteousness was

[1] In treating of the doctrine I give the exact text of this discourse.

set in motion," as the texts inform us, the emperor Asóka later erected a magnificent monument, which the writer has also visited.

Others were soon converted, and in a short time there were sixty, and the Buddha sent them forth singly in all directions to proclaim the doctrine. On that occasion he used the famous words: "Go ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Proclaim, O Bhikkhus, the doctrine glorious; preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure."

Although it is not an easy matter to comprehend the doctrine well enough to be able to explain it to others, this was possible for the first disciples, because almost all of them were persons who knew the then prevailing philosophical systems, being of the educated classes and

principally Brahmins. But it would be wrong to conclude from this that the Buddha recruited his adherents only from these classes; on the contrary, he preached to all, high and low, without making any distinction between classes and castes. This was something quite novel at that time. Then, as now, the prevailing religion in India was Brahmanism, and it did not care to seek converts among the lowest classes; these had only to obey. It required, therefore, great courage, for the system of castes was (and still is) the law of the land, and the law forbade the teaching of the Veda (their holy writings) to the lowest castes. There is a very touching story of a poor outcast who had to sweep away the faded flowers from the temples and whom everybody despised and shunned. One day he heard the Buddha preaching, and the latter intuitively felt that this outcast was fit to enter the Order.

To his great surprise and joy the Buddha addressed him, saying: "Come, O Bhikkhu," thereby admitting him to the Brotherhood and making him the equal of all others. Another story on this subject is this: One day Ánanda, a prominent disciple of the Buddha, asked a low-caste girl who was just drawing water from a well for some water. The girl, who knew that, according to the rules of caste, water in a vessel which passed through her hands was considered impure and not fit to be drunk by one of a higher caste, said: "I cannot give you water, I am of a low caste." Thereupon Ánanda replied: "I did not ask you to what caste you belong, I asked you for water."

The Buddha in his speeches did not use the language of the Indian holy writings (Sanskrit), but spoke in the vernacular of Mágadha. (Páli, in which the oldest documents about Buddhism are written, is

a language closely related to it.) On one occasion he said: "Everyone may learn the doctrine in his own language." And he did not, like the Brahmins, keep back the most important parts of his doctrine for certain special disciples, but he taught and preached everything to the whole people. Buddhism is therefore the first missionary religion.

Here I must relate a story out of the Buddhist books which shows the way in which the Buddha gained the hearts of the people. A young woman named Kisagótami had an only child who died. In her grief she could not believe that the child was dead, and ran to all her acquaintances for a remedy. At last she was told that the only one who could give her a remedy was the Buddha. So she went to him, and he saw at once that mere words of consolation would not suffice to assuage her grief. He therefore told her to bring him a handful of mustard seed from a

house in which nobody had died. She went gladly, for it seemed easy to get such a simple remedy, but wherever she asked for it and mentioned the condition the householders invariably replied: "What are you thinking of? The living are few, but the dead are many." At last she comprehended that her sorrow was not an exception but the common lot, and that suffering is universal. Her grief grew gradually less, her heart calmed down, she buried her child and entered the Buddhist Order.

The Buddha preached for about forty-five years until the day of his death, wandering from place to place, generally followed by a number of his disciples. According to the rules of his Order, he ate only once a day (before noon), and begged his food daily from house to house. He converted kings, nobles, Brahmins, merchants, labourers, men and women of all classes, and many became members of the

Brotherhood or great benefactors of it. He adapted his speeches to the capacity of his hearers, and it is reported that he often used parables, but he carefully discriminated between the actual and figurative sense.

Shortly before his death he fell sick after eating a dish of mushrooms, among which there probably were some poisonous ones. He still had the consideration to say that his host, a smith by the name of Cunda, should not be blamed, but it should rather be considered to his merit to have given him his last meal. He died about 480 B.C., aged eighty years. According to the latest calculations, there is a possible error of three years only in each direction; the year of his death therefore certainly lies between 483 and 477. The latest calculation (by Fleet) fixes it at 483, and gives even the day, 13th October. This is still somewhat doubtful; it is therefore advisable to wait for further

confirmation from other sources. The Buddhists of Ceylon calculate the year of the Buddha's death according to their historical work, the Mahavamsa, at 543 (or 544) B.C. Our year 1922 corresponds therefore with the year 2465 of their reckoning.

During his last hours the Buddha addressed the disciples who were present and repeated to them the chief points of his doctrine. When they asked him who should lead the Brotherhood after his death, he replied that the rules of the Brotherhood and the teachings of the doctrine should be their guide. And when his favourite disciple and steady companion Ananda asked him how they could honour him after his death, he said: "I need no special marks of honour; those of my disciples who always live according to the doctrine and constantly labour for their perfection honour me best." His last words were: "All compound things

are transitory; work incessantly at your salvation." [1]

The Buddha died at Kusinára, not far from the place of his birth, and his body was cremated with kingly honours. I have mentioned that the ashes were divided into eight parts and that they were preserved as relics in dome-shaped monuments.

In this short account of the life of the Buddha only the most important events can be mentioned, but it may truly be said that he was one of the greatest men who ever lived. His influence on his contemporaries was profound and always for good. They said of him: "He lives as he speaks and he speaks as he lives." His modesty was as great as his compassion and love for suffering humanity, and when we

[1] The word translated by salvation can also be rendered by emancipation. In fact, the Buddhist idea of salvation signifies liberation from all ties and passions, and not the entry of the soul into Brahma, as the Brahmins believed, or eternal life in heaven, as in Christianity.

read the personal narratives of his disciples we see with what love and enthusiasm they clung to him. All wanted to be around him continually, but this was of course not possible. In order to console those who were away, he said: "Whoever lives according to the doctrine is near me." It is therefore not astonishing that, in the course of the centuries after his death, legends sprang up about his life, principally in countries where Buddhism spread later. The majority of the people always tend to idolise their great men and heroes. Here the legends about the Buddha cannot be related, though they are often very beautiful and poetical, for it would lead us too far afield.

To this day flowers are laid before the statues of the Buddha, not as sacrifices to a god, but to show the esteem and veneration felt for him as the best and wisest of men, who never can be sufficiently venerated for having given his doctrine

to the world. The formula used on these occasions is: "He is the Sublime One, the Master, the perfectly Enlightened One, the Perfect One in knowledge and deeds, the Blessed One, the Knower of the worlds, the Incomparable One, the Leader of erring humanity, the Teacher of gods and men, the Buddha."

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINE

THE word by which the Buddhists designate their religion, Dhamma, is variously translated as doctrine, law, norm, religion, truth, or world order. In reality it unites all these ideas, and is for the Buddhists all that we understand by these words.

Our knowledge of the original genuine Buddhism depends on the holy writings of the so-called Southern Buddhism which exist in the Páli language, which is related to Sanskrit as Italian is to Latin. The collection is called the Tipítaka, i.e. Three Baskets, because it is divided into three parts, each of which was probably preserved in a basket. Though they were reduced to writing several centuries after

the Buddha's death, namely, in the first century before Christ, we are justified in regarding them as authentic. True, writing was already known in the Buddha's time, but for lack of materials on which to write it was used only for public announcements, which were engraved on stone. But the power of memory of the Hindus was, and still is, so great and perfect that even now the majority of the monks and scholars learn their holy writings entirely by heart, though these are now written on dried palm leaves or even printed on paper. Professor Max Müller, one of the most competent scholars in this field, said that if all these writings were destroyed they could be restored in their entirety by these monks. As the speeches were at first transmitted orally, they used a very clever means to remember them more easily; certain sentences, especially the most important ones, were repeated instead of using the words and, or, etc.

When they were reduced to writing they retained these repetitions; at first hearing they seem strange to us, but in a short time one gets accustomed to them, and then the repetitions of these important sentences in beautiful language sound solemn and impress themselves also on our memory. But another and more important effect of this method is that the texts are extraordinarily correct, and any deviation, however small, can instantly be detected by comparison with similar sayings.

It is well here also to draw attention to the fact that the Buddha's speeches are always prefaced by the words: "Thus have I heard." The reason of this is that after his death his disciples held a council in which each repeated the speeches he had heard and remembered. It is possible therefore that we have in many cases not only the Buddha's ideas but even his own words.

Probably the best way in which to

obtain an understanding of the doctrine of the Buddha is to commence with the speech with which he began his mission. He made it to the five hermits, as I have already mentioned. It is known by the name of Dhámmacákkáppaváttana-Sútta, literally, "setting in motion the wheel of the doctrine"; it is generally translated: "The speech of the Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness," and is in reality the foundation of the whole doctrine. It treats of the Four Noble Truths, and its text is:

"Thus have I heard: At one time the Blessed One stayed at Benares in the deer park Isipátana. There he addressed the five hermits and spoke:

"'There are two extremes which he who strives for deliverance should avoid. One extreme, the craving for the satisfaction of the passions and sensual pleasures, is vulgar, base, degrading, and worthless. The other extreme, exaggerated asceticism

and self-mortification, is painful, vain, and worthless. Only the Middle Path, which the Tathágata has found, avoids these two wrong ways, and opens the eyes, bestows insight, and leads to wisdom, to deliverance, to enlightenment, to Nibbána.

"'It is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely: Right views, right aspirations, right speech, right deeds, right livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"'Now this is the Noble Truth of Suffering: Birth is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation are suffering, union with unpleasant things is suffering, separation from beloved objects is suffering, unsatisfied desires are suffering; in short, the five groups of clinging are suffering.

"'Now this is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering: Verily, it is this thirst, the craving for existence and enjoyment

which leads to renewed rebirths, seeking satisfaction now in this way, now in another. It is the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for existence in the present life or hereafter, or the craving for annihilation.

" ' Now this is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: Verily, it is the complete destruction, conquering, annihilation of this craving.

" ' Now this is the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering: Verily, it is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right views, right aspirations, right speech, right deeds, right livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness, right concentration.' "

These few sentences seem at first sight very simple, almost too simple for supplying the foundation of a great religion and philosophy; nevertheless it requires deep study to comprehend them in their entire significance. The only way to do this is

to read them often and to reflect deeply on them. Here is a short explanation:

The first truth does not need much explaining. It is only necessary to look about with open eyes in order to be convinced that life is full of suffering, and that the comparatively few and short intervals in which we suffer neither physically nor mentally are only interruptions of suffering. It is not necessary to think, for example, of the world war with its innumerable pains and tears, for it could be objected that this was something extraordinary; it is only necessary to visit hospitals, prisons, lunatic asylums, lodgings of the poor, slaughter-houses, and similar places to be convinced of the correctness of the first truth. He who is so egoistic or blind as not to see everywhere immeasurable suffering, or who thinks that "this is the best of all possible worlds" (Leibniz), will not understand the doctrine of the Buddha. There re-

mains, however, to be explained the expression, "the five groups of clinging." The Buddha analysed the personality according to the scientific method into five parts (Khandhas): the body, sensation, perception, psychic dispositions (subconsciousness), and consciousness. And he proves that each of them singly and therefore also all together are transitory, and that the craving for such transitory things, in other words, for personality, leads sooner or later to suffering.

But it will be necessary to examine the second truth somewhat more closely. It shows us the cause of universal suffering; it is craving in its various forms. The Páli word which is here rendered by craving is Tanhá, literally thirst. Probably this expression was chosen because in hot countries like India thirst is the greatest torment. The meaning in our way of expressing it is "the will to live." ("Without beginning and without end is this world

(samsára), not to be perceived is the origin of the beings obsessed by illusion, who seized by the will to live are led uninterruptedly to new births and new sufferings.") This thirst has its root in the will, and manifests itself in the craving for existence, for power, for fame, for enjoyments ; in some persons even for annihilation. These latter may be impelled to commit suicide ; but this too, like all craving, is a kind of egotism, and manifests itself also as aversion and hatred.

The third truth is simple and clear: when the cause, the thirst, ceases, the effect, suffering, also ceases, therefore one must labour with all one's strength to expel and annihilate this thirst.

The fourth truth is the way which leads to the cessation of craving, therefore also of suffering: the Noble Eightfold Path. Each of its eight parts begins with the word "right," and what is right in

every case is explicitly explained in the Buddha's discourses. Here follows a short survey:

Right views are the correct knowledge of the four noble truths and of the whole doctrine of the Buddha, and freedom from superstitions and prejudices.

Right aspirations are the firm resolution to live according to the doctrine after having recognised it as true, and to persevere till the aim is accomplished; the resolution not to harbour any ill-will and not to occasion any sorrow.

Right speech is not to lie, not to slander, not to speak harshly, and not to babble foolishly. (The Buddha said to his disciples: "When you meet, two things are fit for you, instructive conversation or holy silence.")

Right deeds are such as involve no killing either of human beings or animals, not taking anything which is not given one voluntarily, and not committing any

unchaste acts. (What is unchaste is also clearly explained.)

Right livelihood is not to have an occupation or profession which causes suffering to others, such as slaughtering, hunting, selling intoxicating articles, slave-dealing, etc. (This part of the path proves that it is not intended only for members of the Brotherhood, as some scholars assert, but for all men; for the members of the Brotherhood are excluded already by their special rules from all worldly occupations and professions.)

Right endeavour is the endeavour not to allow any bad thoughts and desires to arise; to expel any bad thoughts and desires which have arisen; to awake non-existing good thoughts and desires; and to preserve existing good thoughts and desires and to develop them. As an example showing how Buddhism does not only give advice and let everyone follow it according to his own judgment, but

explains also how to execute it and points out the best way to do so, I will here mention how it advises us to awaken and further the endeavour not to let any bad thoughts and desires arise. It is said: "When bad thoughts and desires arise, we should try to let other wholesome ones arise from them, or should examine their sorrowful nature, or should not pay any attention to them, or should analyse and decompose them into their elements, or should suppress them with the application of all our strength and energy. And then we shall see that these bad pernicious thoughts and desires dissolve themselves and disappear, and the mind becomes firm, quiet, and confident."

Right mindedness is deep reflection on the body, the sensations, the thoughts, and things in general. Right contemplation of these objects shows that they originate and cease from certain causes

and according to certain laws, and that they are therefore all transitory and that there is nothing of which it can be said: "This is mine, this is I, this is my ego" (self). It is meditation, which with the Buddhists takes the place of prayer; since they do not believe in a higher being who could help or hurt them, they of course cannot pray to such a being.

Right concentration is self-introspection, concentration of the mind. This concentration often leads to a state of self-hypnotism. It is said that this state helps us to attain certain so-called supernatural powers, but these powers are not necessary to reach the goal, Nibbána, but are only means to that end, and the Buddha himself said that they alone do not suffice to reach the goal.

We can see now that the discourse about the Four Noble Truths, which in appearance is almost too simple to con-

tain the gist of the whole doctrine, is in reality very deep, and requires long study to be completely comprehended.

There exists also a short formula which gives the most essential part of the doctrine in one sentence. One day Sáripútta, then an adherent of another teacher, met Assaji, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha, and questioned him about the doctrine he was following. Assaji, who is mentioned as one of the five hermits to whom the Buddha preached his initial sermon, replied that he could not give a detailed account of the doctrine, as he had only recently accepted it. Thereupon Sáripútta begged him to give at least a short explanation, whereupon Assaji said: "Of the things which arise through a cause the Buddha has found the cause and also the means to their annihilation. This is the doctrine of the great ascetic." When Sáripútta heard these words he understood: "Whatever is subject to birth

is also subject to annihilation." He rejoiced, and reported this explanation to his friend Móggallána, and they entered the Brotherhood of the Buddha and became two of his most eminent disciples.

This sentence sums up in brief the law of causation, which we are told the Buddha thought out under the Bodhi Tree. He is not only the discoverer of that law, but he made it the foundation of his entire doctrine. The simplest formula, by which this law was expressed, was: "If this is, that is; dependent on this, that originates; if this is not, that is not; by the annihilation of this, that is destroyed."

In the Buddha's discourses we often find a twelvefold formula which gives the connection of cause and effect in a more detailed and methodical manner, the so-called Patíccasamuppáda, Dependent Origination. Its text is: "Dependent on ignorance arise the conformations (sankháras), dependent on the conforma-

tions arises consciousness, dependent on consciousness arises the combination of mind and body (the individual, literally 'name and form'), dependent on the combination of mind and body arises the sixfold realm of the senses, dependent on the sixfold realm of the senses arises contact (of the senses with objects), dependent on contact arises sensation, dependent on sensation arises craving, dependent on craving arises clinging (to things), dependent on clinging arises becoming, dependent on becoming arises birth, dependent on birth arise old age and death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair. Thus arises this entire conglomeration of suffering. But by the total annihilation of ignorance the conformations are destroyed, by the total annihilation of the conformations consciousness is destroyed," and so forth till: "by the total annihilation of birth, old age, and death, grief, lamentation,

pain, sorrow, and despair are destroyed. Thus this entire conglomeration of suffering disappears."

It would lead us too far to give a detailed explanation of these separate parts and their mutual dependence: I should like particularly to call attention to the first link of this chain, ignorance, in order to show how highly Buddhism values knowledge. Ignorance, nescience, is in the Buddhist system the fundamental cause of all evils, even of vices; these are therefore in Buddhism not called sins, but errors. And to the question what ignorance is, the answer was: "Not knowing the Four Noble Truths." This did not mean their wording, but thorough understanding and conviction of their truth. The Buddha once said: "Impeded by ignorance, beings wander and suffer a long time." Later we shall see that man needs morality and knowledge; one of them alone does not suffice. Ethics is the foundation, but

6573
डा. डिल्ली रमण रेवती
रत्नाणी रेवती स्मारक
पुस्तकालय

intellectual perfection is just as necessary. In reality Buddhism is only a system of self-control and self-culture.

In this formula of causality there occur the words: the sixfold realm of the senses. The reason why this number is used is that the Hindus count besides our five senses one more, thinking, with its organ, the mind. We also learn by this formula that according to Buddhist teaching there exists nothing absolute; everything is arising and vanishing, becoming, flowing; nothing is permanent (except space and Nibbána). But Buddhism does not teach nihilism. The above formula is often preceded by the following words: "Everything is: this is one extreme; everything is not: this is the other extreme. These two extremes the Buddha has avoided, and he promulgates the truth which lies in the middle: Dependent on ignorance arise the conformations," . . . etc. And when he was asked: "What

is everything ? " he answered : " The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and feelings, the mind and thoughts." We see that the Buddha analysed the world in almost the same way as our most progressive scholars.

The Buddha also confined himself strictly to the problem he wanted to solve: suffering and the annihilation of suffering. He said : " As the great ocean is permeated by only one taste, the taste of salt, so my doctrine is permeated by only one taste, the taste of salvation." [1] On another occasion he said : " I teach only one thing, suffering and emancipation from suffering." He refused steadfastly to speak about the metaphysical speculations of his contemporaries. He stood firmly on the foundation of reality, and always insisted that things ought to be looked at

[1] The word translated by salvation can, as already mentioned, be translated as well by liberation or emancipation.

as they really are. Therefore there never could arise in Buddhism a contradiction between religion and science, as in all other religions. When, on a certain occasion, an ascetic came to him and put the usual questions: "Is the world eternal or transitory? Is the world finite or infinite? Are the body and mind the same or are they different? Does the being liberated from the chain of rebirths continue to exist or does it cease to exist, or does it exist and at the same time not exist, or does it neither exist nor not exist after death?" The Buddha answered with the following parable: "If a man should be hit by a poisonous arrow and he should say to the physician who wants to extract it: I shall not allow you to extract the arrow before I know to which caste the man belongs who shot it, what his name is, whether he is tall or short, stout or thin, where he lives, of what material the point of the arrow is made, of what material is

the string of the bow, etc. etc., that man would die before he had an answer to all these questions. In like manner a person would die who should study all these philosophical and metaphysical questions. The solving of these and similar questions does not lead to calmness, to real knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbána." At another time, when ascetics and Brahmins of different schools were disputing about such questions, some of the Buddha's adherents came to him for information and he answered with the following parable: "In olden times there lived a king who, when such quarrelling ascetics came to him to have their dispute settled, ordered that all persons born blind in the city should be assembled and that an elephant should be brought near them. Each of these blind persons touched the elephant on a different part: one touched the ear, another a leg, another the tooth, another the trunk, another the body,

another the tail, etc. etc., and they all, of course, gave different descriptions of the animal according to the part they had touched, but each one claimed to know the animal and to give the correct description. Thus it is also with these ascetics and Brahmins, they see only a part of the truth and judge the whole by that part." At another time when a Brahmin asked him about these things, he answered: "I do not hold the view, the world is eternal; this is the truth, any other view is foolish. I do not hold the view, the world is not eternal; this is the truth, any other view is foolish." Again, "I do not hold the view that the being liberated from the chain of rebirths neither exists nor does not exist after death; this is the truth, any other view is foolish." Thereupon the Brahmin asked him in surprise: "Has then the ascetic Gótama no views at all?" The Buddha replied: "These views the Knower of the Truth (Tathágata) has sur-

passed. But he knows: Thus is the bodily form, thus it originates, thus it passes away," and thus also for the other four Khandhas (sentiments, perceptions, conformations, and consciousness), and he closed his discourse with the words: "The Knower of the Truth is liberated, having given up all clinging, because for him all imaginings, all suppositions, all ideas relating to self and mine have disappeared, are gone, annulled, abolished, rooted out." Not yet satisfied, the Brahmin asked: "Where does such a liberated being reappear?" "It reappears is not correct." "Then it does not reappear?" "It does not reappear is not correct." A similar answer was given to the questions whether it reappears and at the same time does not reappear, and whether it neither reappears nor does not reappear. Then the Buddha related the following parable: "If there were a fire before you, would you perceive it?"

"Yes." "If somebody asked you: By what does it burn, what would you say?" "It burns because it is fed by and is dependent on wood." "And when it goes out, would you perceive that it went out?" "Yes." "And if somebody asked you, in which direction it went, to the East, the West, the North, or the South, what would you say?" "The question is not properly put. The fire burned in dependence on wood, and after it had used this up and received no further fuel, it went out, as the saying is." "Thus also all bodily forms, all sensations, all perceptions, all conformations, all consciousness have disappeared, they are gone, annulled, abolished, rooted out for the Knower of the Truth, they cannot be manifested again. Therefore: Such a liberated being reappears, it does not reappear, it reappears and at the same time does not reappear, it neither reappears nor does not reappear; all these views are

incorrect." All such views and opinions the Buddha called the thicket, the jumble, the fetter, the net, and the trap of opinions. But confining oneself to reality and pondering over the questions of suffering and its annihilation does not mean renunciation of deep and earnest thinking, for the way of the Buddha leads to wisdom.

As the Buddha confined himself strictly to reality he also refused to speculate on a so-called first cause. Everything that exists, or more correctly, everything that happens, is an effect from causes. These causes are also the effects of causes and so on back to infinity; a first cause is unthinkable. Therefore there cannot be a beginning, neither a being which, as the first cause, created the universe, because in accordance with the Law of Causation there arises at once the question about the creator of such a creator.

But the Buddha does not deny the possibility of the existence of a so-called god

or gods, in other words, of higher beings than man. The Hindus believed then, and still believe, in a multitude of gods with a highest god, Brahma, and their religion consisted, and consists, principally of prayers and sacrifices to the different gods. But the Buddha taught that, if such beings exist, they are also subject to the universal law of causality; that, if perhaps they live much longer than men, are much more powerful and possess powers which men have not yet acquired, they are nevertheless mortal and have not the power to interfere in the world order, neither to recompense nor to punish. The universe is vast and in it there can exist many possibilities, but not the possibility to annul the law of causality, the foundation principle of the universe. Thus the gods in Buddhism were reduced as it were to figure-heads, and serve in the popular ethical stories to enhance the Buddha's good qualities and wisdom in comparison

with them. Generally they are represented as good-natured and as adorers or even servants of the Buddha, always as harmless. There are many such tales which are of great interest for judging those times; they are almost all full of humour. And in fact humour is also a sign of genuine Buddhism, not only seriousness. The highest god, Brahma, is in these tales generally a good-natured being, very proud of his position, but not very intelligent.

As an example I will give one or two of these tales which also show the attitude Buddhism takes in relation to the gods. Once upon a time an ascetic wanted to find out where the four elements (earth, fire, water, air) finally disappear. In his mind he rose to the lowest gods and asked: "Where do the four elements finally disappear?" They answered: "We do not know, but the next higher gods will be able to tell you." Thereupon he directed his mind towards those gods, asked the

same question and received the same answer. Thus he came gradually to the highest heaven, the world of Brahma and finally to him personally. When the ascetic asked him this same question, Brahma answered: "I am Brahma, the great Brahma, the author, the unsubdued, the master, the maker, the creator, the highest, the leader, the father of all there was, is, and will be." Unabashed, the ascetic said: "I did not ask you who you are, but where the four elements finally disappear." A second and a third time the same question and answer were repeated. At last, when Brahma saw that he could not get rid of the uncomfortable questioner, he took hold of his arm, led him aside and said: "I did not want to confess before the gods of my retinue that I do not know the answer to your question. Go to the Buddha, he will be able to tell you." Another example: When at a certain time the span of life of a being in

one of the heavens had elapsed, he was reborn on the earth. That happened at a time when, in consequence of the previous destruction of life on the earth, there was no living being on it. Soon he felt lonely, and wished that also other beings should come to live on it. Just at that time the span of life of several other beings in another world had elapsed and they were reborn on the earth. Then the one who had been there first thought: "Just now I was wishing that other beings should appear here and they appeared; they must have appeared because I wished it, therefore I am the cause of their appearance and in fact their creator." And the other beings thought: "He was here first, he must have created us." Thus originated the belief in a creator and a creation.

In the Buddhist system gods are entirely superfluous, therefore all prayers and sacrifices, in a word, all reliance on the efficacy of religious rites and ceremonies

is not only useless but a hindrance to spiritual advancement, as it awakens hopes which will not be fulfilled, takes up much valuable time, and diverts the mind from the right road. Therefore Buddhism teaches that the belief in the efficacy of prayers, sacrifices, or other religious rites is one of the worst errors, one of the so-called fetters which hinder the realisation of enlightenment and salvation. (Simple acts of devotion and veneration, such as the offering of flowers before the statues of the Buddha, are of course not condemned.) And it is interesting that among the reasons why contemporary Buddhists reject Christianity is just this, that one of its fundamental principles is the belief in the efficacy of such rites.

As there is nothing permanent in the world, but only an uninterrupted continual process of becoming and passing away, man also is impermanent. We have mentioned already that the Buddha

analyses the personality and finds five groups (Khandhas), the body, sensations, perceptions, conformations, and consciousness, and that he proves that they all are impermanent. In a parable the personality is compared to a cart; as this consists of different parts, the body, the wheels, the pole, etc., but in reality there exists no cart, but only a combination of these parts, and only for convenience' sake all these parts together are called a cart, so also the personality is composed only of these five groups, and only for convenience' sake they are called a personality or an individual. The Buddha calls them groups, because each one of them is not a unity, but composed of many parts. And as all of them singly as well as together are transitory, there is nothing enduring, permanent, eternal, in the personality; in short, it is in a state of continual flux. Therefore there also does not exist an immortal soul.

This fact is expressed in the well-known formula of the Three Characteristics (tilákhana), which belongs to the fundamental basis of Buddhism. Its text is: "All things are transitory (anícca), all things are sorrowful (dukkha), all things are without a self (anattá)." It is difficult to translate anattá; it signifies unreal, without a substance, without a permanent enduring base, without what is generally called soul, I, ego, self, thing in itself. This formula gives a good insight into the philosophy of Buddhism.

To prove this threefold quality the following argument among others is often used: "Is the body permanent or impermanent? —Impermanent.—And what is impermanent, is it sorrowful or felicitous? —Sorrowful.—And can it be said of that which is impermanent and sorrowful: This is mine, this am I, this is my self? —No."—These questions and answers are then repeated in reference to the other

four groups, and the conclusion is arrived at that one should not cling to such impermanent, sorrowful things.

But the Buddha, who confined himself strictly to the reality which alone is comprehensible by us, does not say there is no self, neither does he say there is a self; he asserts only that for our mind no self can be cognised. When he was once directly asked by an ascetic of another school whether there exists a self or not, he remained silent, and when later one of his disciples asked him why he did not answer, he said: "If I had replied yes to the question: Is there a self? I should have approved those who teach the immortality of the soul. Had I answered no, I should have approved those who teach the absolute annihilation in death." This is one of the questions which do not lead to quietness, to real knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbána, as it lies beyond our power of discernment, and those who

assert the one as well as those who assert the other assert something which they cannot know.

The Hindus believed then, and still believe, in metempsychosis, and consider it the only compensating justice. They see that the malefactor often lives happily, while the good man perishes miserably, and their sense of justice demands to know the reason for this seeming injustice. They conclude, therefore, that the malefactor enjoys now the effect of his good deeds in former lives and that the good man suffers on account of bad deeds done in former lives. And so they assert that the soul after the death of the body wanders from body to body, to human, animal, or superhuman, according to an exact law of justice.

But because the Buddha denies such an immortal soul, he logically also denies the reincarnation or rebirth of the soul. Of course he does not deny psychic processes,

such as feelings, ideas, emotions, the will, etc., but only the so-called soul, that certain immaterial something that is said to lie behind these psychic processes and to produce them, that after the death of the body flies to another place, heaven or hell, there to live eternally. But as he was convinced that the law of causality operates not only in the material world but in the entire universe, therefore also in the ethical one, he did not totally reject this idea, but taught a kind of rebirth in the following manner: Life has not only a material but also another cause. This cause is the thirst, the force which we came to know as the cause of suffering in the second noble truth. Modern science also teaches that the amount of matter and force, substance and energy, in the universe always remains constant, that they only change their form and activity, but the mass of each neither increases nor diminishes. As long as this thirst perse-

veres as cause, so long it must act and produce its effect. And when the material base in which it acts dissolves in death, this force must enter some other suitable material in order to be able to continue working. A new living being arises, and this process of arising and dissolving repeats itself as long as the cause persists.

In order to explain this process the ancient Buddhists used different similes, e.g.: When somebody lights a candle, could it burn during the whole night?—Yes.—Is the flame in the first watch the same as in the second?—No.—Is the flame during the second watch the same as in the third?—No.—Then there are different flames burning in the different watches?—No, the flame, nourished by the oil in the same lamp, burned through the whole night.—The same process occurs with living beings. One dies, another is born: without interruption one existence follows another, just as the moments

of consciousness during life follow each other. It can also be explained in this way: If a candle is lit from another, the light does not pass from one to the other, but there is a continuity of the process. —Another simile says: It is just as in the case of milk which comes from the cow and becomes cream and then butter. Would it be right to say: the milk is the same as the cream, the cream the same as the butter?—No, it would be more correct to say: dependent on that, this arises. Thus it is also with living beings. —And then already it was asked: Is it the same being that is reborn or another? And the answer was: Neither the same nor another.—But then it is not the same who does a deed and who receives the recompense or punishment for this deed.— It is not the same, but neither is it another, for without the thirst of the one the other would not have arisen.—The Buddhists used another simile: If somebody plants a tree

and another later steals the fruits of that tree, can the thief plead as an excuse that he did not take the property of the other, for the other owns only the tree which he planted, but not its fruits?—No, for without the tree the fruits would not exist.

We see that they tried to explain this process by similes as well as they could, but like all similes they explain only partially. The difficulty for us to comprehend the process of rebirth consists in the fact that we consider the personality an existing, lasting being (during life), while in reality it is a succession of moments of consciousness, and that in reality the being lives only during one moment of consciousness, then dies and is reborn through the following moment of consciousness. We are never exactly the same during two succeeding moments, neither physically nor mentally, but we notice these changes only after some time, because as a rule they are very minute.

Science asserts that every part of the body is renewed in about seven years; but mind changes much faster. The Buddha once said very aptly: "It would be more correct to consider the body as permanent than mind, because it changes less quickly."

Now the question arises where this force takes hold, what material it seizes. This takes place according to a fixed law: the force takes hold where it finds a suitable material. If gods exist, they must consist of matter, if ever so fine, and the cause may lead to rebirth in the world of the gods, the so-called heaven. Or the cause leads to the world of man, of animals, possibly also to worlds with still more unfavourable conditions, which were called the world of spirits and hell. The universe is immense and the possibilities are limitless. It is allowable to make a comparison with wireless telegraphy; the message does not appear

everywhere, but only in that apparatus which is tuned exactly to the sending apparatus. Before the invention of wireless telegraphy this whole process would have been considered impossible in the West.

This force has certain qualities at the moment of death, and these qualities formed themselves during the life of the individual, in which the force operated. Every deed done facilitates its repetition, and in time it becomes a habit and gradually influences the character. The effect of the deed shows itself therefore not only in the object, but also in the subject, in the doer. Whoever acts well gets accustomed to acting well and thereby himself becomes good, and vice versa. And thus the individual at the moment of death possesses a certain character, and according to this character he is reborn, as long as the cause, the thirst, exists. It is therefore evident that

good deeds and consequently a good character at the moment of death lead to a favourable rebirth, and vice versa, for the force, the thirst, acts as it is just at that moment. This is only the application of the law of causality to the ethical sphere. This fact is called in Sanskrit Karma, in Pali Kamma, literally act, deed. But rebirth never leads to an eternal state, good or bad; when the effect of the deeds of passed lives is exhausted, the effects of the present life produce a new rebirth, according to the same law.

Still, this proceeding does not take place automatically, so that the same deed always produces the same effect, but it depends also on the entire character of the individual. The Buddha used the following simile to explain this: "It is as if somebody would put a handful of salt into a small receptacle of water. Do you believe that the little water in that

receptacle would become salty by this handful of salt ?—Certainly.—And why ? —Because there is little water in it.—But if somebody would put a handful of salt in the river Ganges, do you believe that the river Ganges would become salty by this handful of salt ?—No.—And why ?—Because there is much water in it.—Thus also the same deed has different effects according to the character of the doer."

There is, however, an end to the Samsára, this continuation of rebirths. If the Noble Eightfold Path is strictly followed, the thirst which causes rebirth is gradually annihilated. Then no new rebirth takes place, and that state is reached which is the goal of the doctrine, Nirvána in Sanskrit, Nibbána in Pali. This word does not signify annihilation as is often believed; the literal translation is going out, extinguishing, as the going out or extinguishing of a lamp for want of oil. And to the question what is

extinguished the answer is: "Greed, hatred, and illusion, the three fires of egotism." According to the teaching of the Buddha, Nirvána is a state which can be reached during life; the Buddha himself attained Nirvána during the night under the tree at Buddha Gaya and lived afterwards for forty-five years. (The death of the person who has reached Nirvána is in Pali called Párinibbána.) In Brahminism the same word signifies reunion of the individual soul with the All-soul, Brahma, therefore a state which can only be reached after the death of the body. The use of the same word for two such different ideas caused many misunderstandings among European investigators of Buddhism. And even now many persons, even scholars, are of the opinion that the Buddhist Nirvána signifies annihilation. (It would therefore be advisable in speaking of the Buddhist Nirvána always to use the Pali word Nibbána.)

It is, on the contrary, a state of perfect bliss and absolute freedom; the Buddha said of himself, after he had attained Nirvána: "Among the beings who are happy in this world, I am one." In fact, a state of happiness and serenity is a peculiarity of Buddhism. While other religions condemn or at least do not recommend cheerfulness, Buddhism considers such a state of mind one of the conditions for advancement on the Noble Path. This happiness is heightened by the thought that one reaches this state by one's own effort, that it does not depend on the grace of a god and that consequently neither god nor devil can prevent it. Neither does the real Buddhist know two states of the mind, between which others continually vacillate, fear and hope, the latter of which is even prized in the Occident. Fear and hope are both useless, as according to the law of Karma everything happens as the law of causality

demands. Hope is particularly hurtful, because precious time is lost which could be used for putting in motion other causes and therefore other effects; besides one is generally disappointed and then doubly unhappy.

The person who reaches Nirvána is called Arahá, which may be translated as saint. He continues to live till the effects of former Tanhá and Karma are exhausted; and as now all deeds are done without the least trace of egotism, and the thirst is extinguished, there exists no force to seize any new material at death, and therefore no rebirth takes place.

Does one then enter nothingness? Yes and no. Yes, if we apply our categories of space and time, without which we cannot conceive anything, to this state. Then Nirvána is nothingness. No, if we consider that human reason cannot penetrate into regions where these categories perhaps do not exist. The Buddha con-

sidered this one of the questions that do not help us to reach the goal; it belongs like those about the eternity of the world, etc., to the fetter of opinions. He never left the firm ground of reality, and refused to discuss such subjects with curious or quarrelsome questioners. He therefore avoided the extremes of both materialists and idealists who assert or deny things which they cannot know.

Whatever opinion one may have about rebirth, one must acknowledge that it explains better than any other hypothesis the seeming injustice in the lives of most men; it also explains the appearance of genius and so-called prodigies in the case of children, which the law of heredity in most instances cannot account for. The objection one often hears that the person does not remember his former lives is not valid; we also do not remember most events of the present life, especially those of infancy, which nevertheless are of the

highest importance for the entire life. Memory is linked to the brain which of course is a different one in every life; nevertheless we sometimes meet children in Buddhist countries, especially in Burma and Japan, who during their first years speak about a former life. Some of these statements have been investigated and proved to be correct. When they become older they gradually lose these recollections. And it happens sometimes with us, that somebody who for the first time comes into a certain place has the firm conviction of having been there before. This theory also explains the extraordinary fact of sympathy or antipathy at first sight between two persons. These facts seem to contradict the above remark that memory is linked to the brain. But who can fathom the dark depths of subconsciousness? One part of the "five groups" which constitute the person, the conformations, Sankhára, also translated psychic

tendencies, which appear in the new birth as a kind of inherited disposition, is also explained as subconsciousness. We ought not therefore unconditionally to reject this theory; it is difficult but not impossible to comprehend.

I have treated rather explicitly of this theme, because it is not easily grasped by us who have been brought up on entirely different ideas, but it is very important for a correct understanding of Buddhism. It is not necessary to believe in rebirth in order to live according to its ethical precepts; one must accept in Buddhism only what one understands, and not adopt its teachings in blind faith.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHICS

THE part of Buddhism which exercises the greatest attraction on those who begin to study it is its sublime ethics. Without postulating a God it gives prescriptions which suffice for all relations in life and which aim only at the welfare of all beings, not only of men, but also of animals and even plants.

In the beautiful collection of verses—the Dhámmapáda, one of the sacred books of Buddhism—there is a short epitome of the doctrine from the ethical viewpoint, as the already mentioned sentence of Assaji is from the philosophical one: "To omit all bad actions, to do all possible good, to purify one's heart; that is the religion of the Buddha."

We have seen already that the Noble

Eightfold Path leads to the desired end. For the many who do not want to follow this path in all its details, or who on account of their Karma, their position in life, cannot do so, there exist five precepts which are binding on all who call themselves Buddhists. As will be seen, these precepts are not in the form of commandments, because the Buddhists do not acknowledge a God who could command them. These precepts are voluntary vows, and they are:

I vow not to kill (not only men, but also animals).

I vow not to take what is not given me voluntarily. (Therefore not only stealing is prohibited, but all kinds of exploitation, such as usury, cheating, etc.)

I vow not to do any wrong sexual acts. (What is wrong in this connection is explicitly explained in various sermons.)

I vow not to lie. (This includes also calumny and similar acts. Calumny, for

instance, is forbidden in the following words: "What one hears there one does not repeat here, and what one hears here one does not repeat there, in order not to create disunion; one should speak words of concord; in words of concord one should take delight.")

I vow not to take intoxicants or stupefying drugs. (In tropical countries this precept is even more important than with us, because the effects of alcohol and similar stimulants are even more deleterious there.)

Whoever takes it upon himself to observe these five precepts and pronounces the so-called formula of refuge proclaims himself a Buddhist.

The Refuge Formula (Tisárana, threefold refuge, threefold jewel) is:

I take my refuge in Buddha.

I take my refuge in the Doctrine.

I take my refuge in the Order.

The five precepts are very minutely

Eightfold Path leads to the desired end. For the many who do not want to follow this path in all its details, or who on account of their Karma, their position in life, cannot do so, there exist five precepts which are binding on all who call themselves Buddhists. As will be seen, these precepts are not in the form of commandments, because the Buddhists do not acknowledge a God who could command them. These precepts are voluntary vows, and they are:

I vow not to kill (not only men, but also animals).

I vow not to take what is not given me voluntarily. (Therefore not only stealing is prohibited, but all kinds of exploitation, such as usury, cheating, etc.)

I vow not to do any wrong sexual acts. (What is wrong in this connection is explicitly explained in various sermons.)

I vow not to lie. (This includes also calumny and similar acts. Calumny, for

instance, is forbidden in the following words: "What one hears there one does not repeat here, and what one hears here one does not repeat there, in order not to create disunion; one should speak words of concord; in words of concord one should take delight.")

I vow not to take intoxicants or stupefying drugs. (In tropical countries this precept is even more important than with us, because the effects of alcohol and similar stimulants are even more deleterious there.)

Whoever takes it upon himself to observe these five precepts and pronounces the so-called formula of refuge proclaims himself a Buddhist.

The Refuge Formula (Tisárana, threefold refuge, threefold jewel) is:

I take my refuge in Buddha.

I take my refuge in the Doctrine.

I take my refuge in the Order.

The five precepts are very minutely

treated in many of the Buddha's discourses, so that there cannot be any doubt as to their use in all possible situations in life. They are treated from the positive as well as from the negative aspects. Thus, it is not only prohibited to kill and to ill-treat or torture men and animals, but it is strongly recommended to practise good-will and universal love.

There is no better way to describe Buddhist ethics than to quote from the literal translation of the sacred writings, and the exact text will give a better idea of the spirit of the Doctrine than long explanations. Of course only comparatively few sentences out of the total can be selected, and the selection is not always easy, because it is necessary to omit many beautiful passages.

Here follows a small anthology selected at random and without a fixed order: "The suppression of greed, hatred, and delusion, that is the religion of the

Buddha."—"Love and benevolence is true religion."—"Of whatever doctrine ye are convinced that it leads to peace and not to passion, to humility and not to pride, to frugality and not to greed, to contentedness and not to quarrelsomeness, of that ye may be certain that it is the truth, the law, the doctrine of the Master."—"The Buddha does not prize the gifts given to him, but those given to the poor."—"Who desires to honour me, let him nurse the sick."—"Meditation on transitoriness leads to victory over greed, meditation on suffering leads to the annihilation of hatred, meditation on the non-existence of an immortal soul leads to the cessation of selfishness."—"Nirvána is where the precepts of justice and morality are followed."—"When the fires of greed, of hatred, and of delusion, and the flames of all other passions are extinguished, then Nirvána is reached."—"Health is the highest

good, contentedness is the richest treasure, peace of mind is the best friend."—" The best gift is the gift of the Truth."—" Blessed are the peaceful, for victory breeds enmity, and to be conquered is suffering." —" Blessed is he who gives with a pure heart; verily I say unto you, such an one is greater than he who won a hundred battles and conquered all his enemies." —" Blessed are they who conquer themselves."—" Blessed are they who honour their parents."—" In communion with the highest god are those families where mother and father are honoured by the children. The highest god—this signifies mother and father, and why? Mother and father do much for their children; they are their nourishers, their preservers, the guides of this world."—" Blessed are those who live free from hatred amid the hating world."—" True happiness exists only where good thoughts live in the heart."—" It is an old truth: hatred

is never conquered by hatred, only by non-hatred hatred is conquered."—" Overcome the angry one by love, the bad one by goodness, the mean one by liberality, the liar by the truth."—" With a pure heart and full of love I will treat others as myself."—" I abhor a possession gained by injustice like poisonous food."—" In what consists true religion? In causing as little suffering as possible, in doing as much good as possible, and in showing love, compassion, truthfulness, and purity as often as possible."—" Not by birth is one honourable, not by birth is one to be disdained; by deeds one becomes honourable, by deeds one becomes despicable." (Allusion to the pretentions of castes and classes.)—" To honour the parents, to protect wife and children, to have a peaceful occupation, is great bliss." (This sentence shows, just as the fifth part of the Noble Eightfold Path, right livelihood, that Buddhism does not demand leaving

one's family and retiring from the world, as many believe and assert. Only those who feel that they must do so in order to advance on the path to redemption may do so.)—" Who looks for his own happiness and torments his fellow-creatures who also wish for happiness, will not find real peace."—" Benevolence toward subordinates, esteem for those who deserve esteem, self-restraint joined to goodness and pity, these and similar acts are the customs ye ought to follow, and not superstitious rites and ceremonies." (Allusion to the usages of the Brahmins.) —" Ye yourselves must exert yourselves; the Buddha is only the teacher."—" It is good to restrain the body, it is good to curb the thoughts, good is perfect self-command. He who is master over himself liberates himself from all suffering."—" A mind which does not tremble at the blows of fate, which is free from sorrow and passions, and always remains in

peace, has great bliss."—"My deed is my property, my deed is my heritage; neither in the air, nor in the depths of the ocean, nor in mountain caves, nowhere canst thou escape the consequences of thy deeds."—"Many dive in the water or sprinkle themselves with it, believing thereby to purify themselves; one is not purified by water, but by good deeds."—"As I am, so are the others; as the others are, so am I; penetrated by this knowledge, do not hurt others, but do them good."—"As a mother watches over her only child, even by sacrificing her life, thus let everyone harbour unlimited love towards all beings, for love towards all is true religion."—"Be compassionate and pitiful towards everything that lives."—"Money and other goods are volatile possessions; if they are useful to others, they are an advantage."—"To give perfectly unselfishly without hope of reward in this or another world is the best way

of giving. Of such a giver it is said: by distributing he accumulates, by dividing he gains, by giving he becomes rich." (The Buddhists consider that the one who receives gifts is not so much obliged to the donor as the latter is to the former, because the recipient affords to the donor an opportunity of doing a good deed.)—"The follower of the Buddha shall not tremble, when he is offended, nor boast, when he is praised."—"It is easy to see the faults of others, but one's own one does not notice; you must, on the contrary, mind your own faults and avoid them."—"There are two kinds of joys, the selfish joy and the unselfish joy; the noble joy is the unselfish joy."—"Continually consider that it is always the right time to aspire to knowledge; know that knowledge united to goodness is the most beautiful ornament."—"If a person who has done wrong acknowledges it and avoids it in future, then the effect of the bad deed on

himself gradually exhausts itself." (This is the only kind of repentance Buddhism prizes, and not vain and useless lamentations).—"By compassion and frugality one accumulates a real treasure; such a treasure cannot be lost; such a treasure no thief nor any power can steal."—"If a person conquers thousands in battle, know ye that he is the greatest conqueror who conquers himself."—Once when the Buddha saw that some boys were tormenting fish, he asked them whether they dreaded pain, and when they said yes, he admonished them, saying: "If you dread pain, never inflict any on others, not even on the meanèst creature."—This small selection will suffice to illustrate the ethics of Buddhism.

There exists a discourse on the mutual duties of different classes, the well-known Sigalováda-Sutta, which shows us how humanity could live happily and contentedly if it would follow these in-

structions. The part of the Sutta which interests us in this connection is: "The parents shall keep their children away from vice, educate them to do good, give them a good education in everything worth knowing, assist them in the choice of their consorts, and not withhold their heritage from them.—The children shall honour their parents, support them in old age, fulfil their duties, protect their parents' property, conduct themselves properly, and honour their memory after death.—The husband shall esteem his wife, treat her respectfully, love her, be true to her, act so that others esteem her, and provide her with everything necessary.—The wife shall love her husband, keep the house in good order, be hospitable, chaste, and true, and fulfil all her duties skilfully and with zeal.—The friend shall treat his friend as he would like to be treated by him, shall always be benevolent and good to him, guard his friend's interests, assist

him by word and deed, divide his property with him, keep him back from imprudent acts, give him a refuge in times of distress and danger, and in misfortune loyally help him.—The teacher shall incite his disciples to the good, instruct them in sciences and morals, acknowledge their labours, and protect them from dangers.—The disciples shall honour their teachers, obey them, and follow attentively their instruction.—The employer shall care for the welfare of his employés, not overburden them with work, give them the wages they merit, assist them when they are sick, and allow them the necessary holidays.—The employés shall esteem their superiors, not demand excessive remuneration, work zealously and gladly, and not speak badly of them without sufficient cause."—These instructions refer to rather more primitive social conditions than ours, but they would even now heal or at least mitigate many of our social maladies.

CHAPTER IV

THE BROTHERHOOD

ALTHOUGH every human being with a strong will and perseverance can reach the aim, the quiet, peaceable state of Nirvána, it is nevertheless difficult for persons in the affairs of the world to traverse the whole road on account of their social, economical, and family duties. In order to facilitate this, the Buddha founded a Brotherhood or Order, called Sangha. It was the custom in India at that time for philosophical and religious teachers to found a more limited circle of those who followed them and propagated their teaching, as also Jesus did with his disciples. The Brotherhood Sangha is similar to an Order of monks; but it differs greatly in certain respects from

Christian monastic Orders. Buddhism has no priests; the members of the Order have therefore no authority over the laity; they only explain to it the doctrine, when asked to do so. The members of the Order are also teachers, and in most of the temples or convents, or whatever the places may be called where they reside, there are regular schools, often the only schools available. There are therefore in Buddhist countries practically no illiterates. In the Order itself there are no superiors and subordinates; no one is forced to obey another, for Buddhism does not aim at the mortification of the intellect and will, but on the contrary at their strengthening and independence. Older members have of course some authority on account of their longer experience and better knowledge of the doctrine, but only when their conduct is blameless. We saw already that the Buddha refused shortly before his death to name a chief for the Brotherhood, but that

he referred his disciples to the Doctrine as their guide. He said: "Be ye a guide to yourselves, be your own refuge; let no one else be your guide and refuge." Only the novices shall obey their teachers, as long as they are novices. Neither must the members of the Brotherhood undergo any exercises of penitence or mortifications, nor any superfluous privations and torments, as was the universal custom in India for members of religious Orders at that time, and is the case even now. They were to practise only such exercises as would help them to reach the goal, but must abstain from all luxuries and worldly pleasures, and lead a chaste life.

The members of the Brotherhood are called in Sanskrit Bhikshu, in Pali Bhikkhu, literally mendicant, because they live entirely on the gifts they receive from the laity. They are not permitted to accept money, only food, clothes, lodging, and medicine in case of sickness. The laity

is told to give these things only to such members as merit them on account of their pure lives. The sacred writings even say that a so-called Bhikkhu may still be a man of the world, while a person who does not belong to the Brotherhood may be on the Noble Eightfold Path, and that the habit does not make the genuine Bhikkhu. We read there: "Neither abstinence from fish and meat, nor nakedness, nor tonsure, nor the mortification of the body, nor a hairy robe, nor the adoration of a God can purify a person who is still caught in delusion." (Allusion to Brahminical usages.)—"Not what goes into the mouth is impure, but often what comes out of it." (Allusion to fasting, prohibition of certain foods, etc.)—"A man of the world and an ascetic are not different, if both have conquered selfishness; but when the heart is chained to bad desires outward signs of goodness are useless."—"Even if jewels adorn the body, the heart can

subdue a worldly spirit, and the habit of the hermit does not protect from carnal thoughts."—Here I will also mention the general mutual duties of the laity and the members of the Brotherhood as written in the already mentioned Sigalováda-Sutta. "The lay member shall esteem the members of the Brotherhood and also members of other religious Orders, and assist them with thoughts, words, and deeds. The members of the Brotherhood shall restrain the lay members from doing bad acts, admonish them to do good, receive them amicably, instruct them in the Doctrine, help them to remove their doubts, and show them the path to peace."—(I would call attention here to the fact that it is recommended to the laity to support also members of other religious Orders. When king Pasénadi of Kósala became a follower of the Buddha, having previously been a follower of another religious teacher, the Buddha particularly requested him not to

stop supporting his former co-religionists, though they, and particularly their leader, were among the strongest opponents of the Buddha and his doctrine.)

The Buddha founded also after some hesitation, at the request of his step-mother Pajápati and his favourite disciple Ánanda, an Order for female members or nuns; the former became its first member, as already mentioned.

It would lead us too far to mention the rules for the members of the Brotherhood; they are precepts which experience has demonstrated as helpful for reaching the goal. But these precepts do not bind the members for their entire life; when some-one finds that he cannot follow them, or when he regrets having joined the Order, he is perfectly free to leave it and to return to his former life and occupation. Nobody esteems him the less on that account, neither the monks nor the laity. In some countries, for instance in Burma and Siam,

it is customary for everyone—even the princes—to enter the Order for some time in order to accustom themselves to its life, to get well acquainted with it, and thereby to learn to honour and esteem the monks.

The Brotherhood is still in existence, and is consequently one of the most ancient Orders of the world.

CHAPTER V

IN DEFENCE OF BUDDHISM

IN this chapter I want to refute some of the objections and prejudices often entertained against Buddhism.

One of the most widespread is that Buddhism is pessimistic, but this is an error. It is neither optimistic nor pessimistic; it avoids these two extremes and teaches the truth which lies between them. We have observed that serenity is a state to be fostered in order to approach the goal. Among the means to reach this goal are the so-called "seven steps to enlightenment," and one of these steps is cheerfulness. (The others are: Clearness of mind, investigation, energy, repose, concentration, equanimity.) And among the "four

sublime contemplations" there is one to be made with a joyful heart, as we shall soon see. All this does not seem very pessimistic. And a religion which teaches that one can make an end of suffering by one's efforts is certainly less pessimistic than one which teaches that one's salvation depends on the grace of a God, that only few are chosen and that all the rest are doomed to eternal damnation. In fact, we have only to observe a Buddhist people, for instance the Burmese, in order to be convinced that Buddhism is not in the least pessimistic, but on the contrary happy and joyful. At religious festivals, for example, held, as already mentioned, at the full moons, there is absolutely no feeling of being a "poor sinner"; everybody is merry without being boisterous.

Another reproach made against Buddhism is that it paralyses energy, that it makes people indolent, as one has only to meditate quietly and not to work. Leaving

aside the fact that meditating deeply is very hard work, Buddhism persistently urges perseverance and zeal, and blames idleness and laziness. This can best be proved by citing a few literal sentences from the sacred texts: "I know nothing that leads so easily to the bad and hinders the good as frivolity, laziness, lack of moderation, discontent: I know nothing that leads so easily to the good and hinders the bad as energy."—"It is better to live only one day and to work energetically, than to live a hundred years in idleness and laziness."—"Laziness is contamination."—"Rather may my muscles, skin, and tendons, with the bones, flesh, and blood, wither and rot, than that I give up my energy, till I reach all that can be reached by human perseverance and effort."—"Right endeavour" is, as we have seen, one of the parts of the "noble eightfold path," and the manner in which it is explained shows that it is necessary to

use constant earnest energy. And we have just seen that energy is one of the "seven steps to enlightenment." When the Buddha was asked why his disciples are called fighters, he answered: "Because they fight for lofty virtue, for lofty endeavour, for lofty wisdom." When the Buddha was reproached (at the outset) that he taught not-doing, he replied: "I teach not-doing and doing. I teach not-doing of bad acts, not-uttering bad words, and not-harbouring bad thoughts. I teach doing good acts, uttering good words, and harbouring good thoughts. Thus I teach not-doing and doing." And he said: "One virtue effects great weal. Which? Indefatigable zeal in good things."

I have mentioned above how highly Buddhism values love towards all beings; but it also particularly enjoins that one should not hate one's enemies. (This is all that can reasonably be demanded, for

if we are honest with ourselves, we must confess that it is impossible really to love our enemies; all that we can do is not to hate them, not to harbour ill-feelings or thoughts of revenge against them.) Here follow some passages from the texts: "If someone should strike you with the hand, stick, or sword, you must abstain from revengeful thoughts and feelings. On the contrary you should meditate thus: 'may my heart remain tranquil, may no bad sound escape from my mouth; I desire to remain kind and compassionate, without secret resentment.' Even if robbers sever your limbs and joints with a sharp saw, he who should give way to anger would not be following my doctrine."— "As the light of all the stars does not amount to the sixteenth part of the light of the moon, so all meritorious acts of man are not worth the sixteenth part of love, the redemption of the heart. As the sun rises and shines and lightens and illuminates

everything in a clear, cloudless sky, so love, the redemption of the heart, surpasses all meritorious acts of man and shines and lightens and illuminates."—" Love is the redemption of the heart."—" May all beings be happy."—" May all living beings, small and big ones, near and far, visible and invisible, enjoy peace and happiness; may they be free from sorrow and pain."—I may also mention a practice of meditation which is highly praised in the texts and constantly recommended for the purification of the heart. It is called " the four immeasurable sublime meditations ": " Embrace with a loving heart one direction, then a second one, then a third one, then a fourth one, above and below, round about on all sides, and recognising yourself in everything and identifying yourself with everything, do not leave out any living thing and penetrate the whole world with a loving heart, with a full, deep, boundless heart, free from anger and

hatred."—The same is then repeated, with the difference that the words loving heart are replaced by compassionate heart, joyful heart (to diffuse joy everywhere), and peaceful heart.

Another reproach Buddhism is often subjected to is that it fosters egotism, because everyone tries to be virtuous in order to gain a favourable rebirth. Even if such a motive should exist it would not be blamable, as long as one does good to others out of so-called egotism; and we saw in the chapter on The Ethics the great value Buddhism ascribes to good deeds. But even granted this egotism, it is less strong than that of persons who believe that their own soul will reap eternal recompense for their good deeds, whereas Buddhists believe that they themselves will not reap the recompense, but that they only prepare a good rebirth for the being which arises as an effect of their deeds; and even this not for ever, but only for a

limited time. Further, it is specially declared that if the good is done with the object of reaching Nirvána, it would be egotism, with the consequence that Nirvána would not be reached, for Nirvána, being a state of perfect selflessness, cannot be reached by selfishness.

Buddhism demands, as we have seen, not only morality but also knowledge; it demands that we follow the doctrine, not because we believe in the Buddha or any dogmas, but because we are convinced of the truth and universal applicability of its precepts by our own reflection and consideration. We have also seen that the twelvefold formula of dependent origination has as its first part and foundation not-knowing, ignorance. The Buddha compared the Brahmins, who blindly believe their sacred books, the Veda, to a row of blind people; neither the first one sees, nor does the last one see, nor those in between, but they must believe

what others tell them. The duty to investigate and not to believe blindly is very well shown in the celebrated discourse to the Kalámians. On a certain occasion some inhabitants of Kaláma came to the Buddha and said: "Many Brahmins and ascetics come to us and propound their different systems. This raises doubts in us and we do not know what to believe." Thereupon the Buddha said: "It is proper and very natural that doubts should arise in you; blind belief is to be rejected. Do not judge by hearsay, nor by tradition, nor on mere assertion, nor on the authority of so-called sacred writings, nor by logical deductions, nor by methodical derivation, nor by the mere evidence of the senses, nor by long-accustomed opinions and conceptions; do not judge according to appearances, nor believe anything because an ascetic or teacher has said it; but when you yourselves perceive: 'these things are wrong, these things

are objectionable, these things when done produce woe and suffering for us and others,' then reject them. But when you perceive: 'these things are right, these things are unobjectionable, these things when done produce weal and happiness for us and others,' then adopt them and act accordingly." Shortly before his death the Buddha said to his disciples: "When you have any opinion, is it because you want to honour and esteem me, and out of reverence for me?"—"No, master."—"Is it not because you yourselves have grasped and conceived this opinion?"—"So it is, master."—The Buddha even said that one should emancipate oneself from his doctrine, when it is not needed any more to reach the goal, that is, when the goal is reached. He compared the doctrine to a raft which is used in order to cross a river, but which is abandoned when the other shore is reached. (This parable is par-

ticularly apt, because in Buddhism Nirvána is called the other shore.)

In every country and in every religion miracles play a large part. But as Buddhism demands reflection and knowledge, it does not rely on miracles. The Buddha specially forbade his disciples to perform so-called miracles, and one of the four acts which entails expulsion from the Brotherhood is boasting about being able to perform miracles. (The other three are: killing a human being, stealing, and unchastity.) And in a well-known discourse he prohibited his disciples to predict the future or tell fortunes by the position of the stars or other means. When on a certain occasion some of his disciples asked him for permission to perform a miracle in order to convert certain persons who wanted to see one in order to be convinced of the superiority of the Buddha's doctrine, he said: "Prestidigitators can also perform such miracles;

the greatest miracle is the miracle of conversion by conviction."

As we saw, the Buddha commenced his career with the words: "Opened be to all the gate of deathlessness; who has ears to hear come and listen!" And in one of his discourses he said: "Three things shine before the whole world, the moon, the sun, and my doctrine." And at another time: "I have not the closed fist of a teacher who propounds his principal teaching only to some of his favourite disciples." (This was the custom of the Brahmins.) It is therefore totally wrong to attribute to Buddhism any secret doctrines and label them "Esoteric Buddhism," as has been done in the presentation of some modern so-called religions and philosophies as, for example, Theosophy. It is a matter for regret that these systems borrow from Buddhism expressions like Karma and Nirvána, combine them with Brahminical, Christian, and other ideas,

principally mystical and occult, and call this conglomeration Buddhism. Genuine Buddhism is the reverse of mystical, rejects miracles, is founded on reality, and refuses to speculate about the absolute and other so-called first causes. While the mysticism and miracles of "Esoteric Buddhism" have proved attractive to many, they have prevented others from studying genuine Buddhism. The English scholar, Professor Rhys Davids, probably the best authority on Buddhism in the Occident, said in regard to the well-known work, "Esoteric Buddhism" (by Sinnett): "The title is misleading; the contents are neither esoteric nor Buddhism; besides, there is no esoteric Buddhism."

Because the Buddha hesitated to admit women into the Order, and because he, after yielding to the entreaties of his stepmother Pajápati and his favourite disciple Ánanda, prescribed severe rules

for them, the adversaries of Buddhism reproach it with being inimical to women. But when one considers the position of women in India at that time (and what it is still with the Brahmins), one can understand his hesitation. On the other hand, many events in his life show the great esteem he had for women, and he himself named various of his female disciples as among the most eminent and learned of his adherents. And it is remarkable that in the holy books of Buddhism, whenever men and women are cited together, the latter are generally mentioned before the former; they say, for example, always mother and father, never vice versa. And to-day the economical and social position of women in Buddhist countries is much more favourable than in any other Oriental and even in many Occidental countries. In Burma, for instance, woman is legally and socially on a perfectly equal footing with man, and she possesses many rights

which her sisters in Europe are still endeavouring to obtain.

We have seen already that at the time of the Buddha there existed in India the greatest toleration in regard to the propagation of religious and philosophical opinions. This toleration Buddhism has maintained to the present day. During the 2500 years since that time not a single person has been converted by force, nor has there been spilt a single drop of blood for the propagation of the doctrine. And yet Buddhism is a missionary religion; it spread rapidly over all Central and Eastern Asia, and modified the customs of wild peoples like the Mongols and Tartars. When Buddhism was adopted by the powerful emperor Asóka about 250 B.C., and became as it were the religion of the state, the principles of toleration were applied if possible in still greater measure, so that it seems almost fabulous to us with our so-called culture. Of this

we have the surest proofs in the inscriptions which Asóka had engraved on rocks and stone pillars over the whole extent of his immense empire. I have mentioned already one of these pillars which he had erected at the birthplace of the Buddha. Now I shall cite some of these edicts, partly abridged, but true to the sense, in order to show the character of this sovereign after his conversion to Buddhism (before his conversion he is reputed to have been tyrannical and bloodthirsty): "Everywhere in my dominions as well as among my neighbours I made curative arrangements for men and for beasts. Medicinal herbs also, wholesome for men and beasts, wherever they were lacking, have been imported and planted. On the roads wells have been dug, trees planted, and rest-houses erected for the enjoyment of man and beast."—"Everywhere in my dominions officials must proceed on circuit every five years, as well

as for other business, as for this special purpose, namely, to give instruction in the Law of Piety, to wit: A meritorious thing is obedience to father and mother, liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, Brahmins, and ascetics; a meritorious thing is abstention from the slaughter of living creatures; a meritorious thing is small expense and small accumulation."—"Official business has been delayed for a long time. Now by me this arrangement has been made that at all hours and in all places, whether I am dining, or in the ladies' apartments, in my bedroom, or in my closet, in my carriage, or in the palace gardens, the official reporters should report to me on the people's business, and I am ready to do the people's business in all places. Because I never feel full satisfaction in my efforts and dispatch of business. For the welfare of all folk is what I must work for, and the root of this, again, is in effort

and the dispatch of business. And whatever exertions I make are made to the end that I may discharge my debt to animate beings, that they may all become happy." —" His Majesty the King desires that in all places men of every denomination may abide, for they all desire mastery over the senses and purity of mind. Man, however, varies in his wishes and in his inclinations. Some will perform the whole, others will perform but one part of the commandment. Even for a person to whom lavish liberality is impossible, the virtues of mastery over the senses, purity of mind, gratitude, and steadfastness are altogether indispensable."—" My officials shall prevent unjust imprisonment, remove obstacles, assist the poor and old and persons with large families."—"Treat everybody with consideration, even the poor and wretched, yea, even slaves and servants." —" Formerly in the kitchen of His Majesty

each day many hundreds of living creatures were slaughtered. But now only three living creatures are slaughtered daily; even those three henceforth shall not be slaughtered. In my dominions no animal may be slaughtered for sacrifice."—"People perform various ceremonies on different occasions, such as in time of sickness, at the weddings of sons, the birth of children, and when setting out on journeys; many of these are trivial and worthless. Ceremonies certainly have to be performed, although that kind bear little fruit. These, however, bear great fruit: proper treatment of servants, honour to teachers, gentleness towards living creatures."—"His Majesty cares not so much for gifts or external reverence as that there should be a growth of the essence of the matter in all sects. This assumes various forms, but the root of it is restraint of speech, to wit, a man must not do reverence to his own sect or disparage that of another

man without reason, because the sects of other people all deserve reverence for one reason or another. By thus acting, a man exalts his own sect, and at the same time does service to the sects of other people."—" The Kalingas were conquered by His Majesty; one hundred and fifty thousand persons were thence carried away captive, one hundred thousand were there slain, and many times that number perished. Directly after the annexation of the Kalingas began His Majesty's love for the Law of Piety. Thus arose his remorse for having conquered the Kalingas, because the conquest of a country involves the slaughter, death, and carrying away of the people into captivity. That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Majesty. Should anyone do him wrong, that too must be borne with by His Majesty, if it can possibly be borne with. For His Majesty desires that all animate beings should have security,

self-control, peace of mind, and joyousness. And this is the chiefest conquest in the opinion of His Majesty, the conquest by the Law of Piety. And a conquest won thereby is everywhere a conquest full of delight." (H. G. Wells says that Asóka is the only monarch on record who abandoned warfare after victory.) — "All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they may enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness in both this world and the next, so also I desire the same for all men."—Though many more such edicts of similar character could be cited, I believe that these suffice to show the spirit of Buddhism and the results it produces. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

But not only in regard to ethics, but also in æsthetics, Buddhism exercised a very beneficial influence. In all countries where it penetrated there arose a specific Buddhist art, which reached a high degree

of perfection. It is not possible to write in detail on this topic here; it would require a special treatise. I therefore mention it incidentally, and will only say that the grand edifices and monuments in all Buddhist countries arouse the admiration of their beholders.

It is remarkable to what degree Buddhism abhors all coercion and values liberty; even in the Brotherhood founded by the Buddha there is no vow of obedience. Buddhism aims at liberating man from all chains and ties, bodily, spiritually, religiously, and socially. Buddhists, moreover, never try to influence the political or religious views of their neighbours. Edwin Arnold, the author of the beautiful poem on the life and doctrine of the Buddha, "The Light of Asia," calls Buddhism "the grandest manifestation of human freedom ever proclaimed."

The principal differences between Buddhism and other religions are stated

in the "Buddhist Catechism," by Subhadra Bhikshu (translated into English by the writer of this treatise), as follows: "Buddhism teaches perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal God, the highest knowledge without a revelation, a moral world order and just retribution carried out with necessity by reason of the laws of nature and of our own being, continued existence without an immortal soul, the possibility of redemption without a vicarious redeemer, a salvation in which everyone is his own saviour and which can be attained in this life and on this earth by the exercise of our own faculties without prayers, sacrifices, penances, and ceremonies, without ordained priests, without the mediation of saints, and without divine grace."

There is often a difference of opinion, as to whether Buddhism is a religion or a philosophy. This depends on what meaning is given to the word religion. If by

this word is meant only the narrow Christian idea of religion, the belief in God and certain dogmas, and when the word is taken in its literal sense, bound (to God), then Buddhism is no religion. But if by religion is meant a doctrine which satisfies both heart and mind and gives consolation and assistance in all circumstances of life, then certainly Buddhism is a religion, as its innumerable adherents in past and present times testify. But Buddhism is also a philosophy, for it does not demand blind acceptance, but personal investigation and examination, and a firm conviction resulting from these. It explains the facts of the world through natural laws and not through extra- and super-mundane interventions by a God or mystical forces. (Carus in his "Gospel of Buddha" calls Buddhism "the religion of salvation from evil by enlightenment.")

I believe that this description of genuine

IN DEFENCE OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism, though short and therefore incomplete, proves that we can learn much from it, and that it still possesses to-day a living force which could be of use in solving many problems which trouble us in our social and political affairs. It is the true completion of our scientific and too materialistic views of the world; for the purely scientific view does not satisfy our heart, science being neither ethical nor unethical. Inasmuch as Buddhism belongs to the history of philosophy and religion, I am of the opinion that it should be taught in our schools as an integral part of our general culture.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY NEILL AND CO., LTD. EDINBURGH.

RIDER'S PUBLICATIONS

THE INNER TEACHING AND YOGA.

By CHARLES WASE. Crown 8vo, Cloth, 4s. 6d. net.

"The well-known occultist Mr Charles Wase has given us a greatly condensed but very valuable summary of the practical philosophy concerning mental and spiritual development, as taught by Eastern Yoga methods. Students of the excellent and fuller works of Yogi Ramacharaka will readily follow the splendid teachings of this smaller book, and the novice will find it a mine of practical information on points concerning health and development. If faithfully carried out, the author's suggestions cannot fail to benefit greatly all who desire physical, mental, and spiritual well-being."—*Bristol Times & Mirror.*

LIFE'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY.

An Introduction to Popular Metaphysics and its Practical Psychology. By CHARLES WASE. Crown 8vo, Cloth, 4s. 6d. net.

The aim of this book is to help the reader to think and act in harmony with the higher creative purposes of life, and thus become the expression of real Power—a growing conscious individualisation of the Creative Mind, the one infinite and eternally developing Cause with which we are in unity.

OCCULTISTS AND MYSTICS OF ALL AGES.

By RALPH SHIRLEY, Author of "A Short Life of Abraham Lincoln," etc. Crown 8vo, Cloth, Illustrated, 4s. 6d. net.

Contents.—Apollonius of Tyana—Plotinus—Michael Scot—Paracelsus—Emanuel Swedenborg—Cagliostro—Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland.

"This book may not inaccurately be described as romance—using the word in its widest understanding. It deals with the deeds and sayings of wonderful people, who each in turn helped to mould and to remake the state of the world. This book can be cordially commended to all lovers of these engrossing subjects."—*The Ladies' Field.*

WILLIAM RIDER & SON, LTD., 8 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4

The Great Initiates Series

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 2s. 6d. net per Volume.

JESUS: THE LAST GREAT INITIATE. Translated from "Les Grands Initiés" of EDOUARD SCHURÉ, by F. ROTHWELL, B.A.

"Always suggestive and often eloquent."—*Scotsman.*

KRISHNA AND ORPHEUS, the Great Initiates of the East and West. By EDOUARD SCHURÉ. Translated by F. ROTHWELL, B.A.

"The work is learned and interesting."—*The Scotsman.*
"An admirable translation."—*Glasgow Herald.*

PYTHAGORAS, and His System of Philosophy (The Delphic Mysteries). By EDOUARD SCHURÉ. Translated by F. ROTHWELL, B.A.

"In this excellent translation the reader is familiarised with the life and philosophy of Pythagoras."—*The Daily Express.*

HERMES AND PLATO. The Mysteries of Egypt and the Mysteries of Eleusis, by EDOUARD SCHURÉ. Translated by F. ROTHWELL, B.A.

"M. Schuré has presented a picture of ancient religious indoctrination that will give an excellent general idea of the scope and significance of the Greek and Egyptian mysteries."—*Light.*

RAMA AND MOSES. The Aryan Cycle and the Mission of Israel. By EDOUARD SCHURÉ. Translated by F. ROTHWELL, B.A.

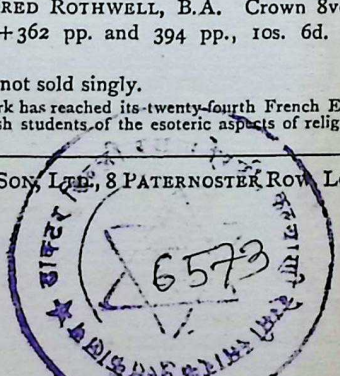
"M. Schuré brings to his work a wonderful picture-making faculty."—*T.P.S. Book Notes.*

THE GREAT INITIATES. Complete Edition of EDOUARD SCHURÉ'S "Les Grands Initiés," with an Introduction to Esoteric Teaching, and a Frontispiece Portrait of the Author. Translated by FRED ROTHWELL, B.A. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 2 vols., xxxviii+362 pp. and 394 pp., 10s. 6d. net the two volumes.

N.B.—Volumes not sold singly.

"The fact that this work has reached its twenty-fourth French Edition may well stir the interest of English students of the esoteric aspects of religion."—*Literary World.*

WILLIAM RIDER & SON, LTD., 8 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4



RIDER'S PUBLICATIONS.

THE INNER TEACHING AND YOGA. By CHARLES WASE. Crown 8vo, cloth, 4s. 6d. net.

"The well-known occultist, Mr. Charles Wase, has given us a greatly condensed but very valuable summary of the practical philosophy concerning mental and spiritual development as taught by Eastern Yoga methods. The novice will find it a mine of practical information on points concerning health and development. If faithfully carried out, the author's suggestions cannot fail to benefit greatly all who desire physical, mental and spiritual well-being."
—*Bristol Times and Mirror.*

LIFE'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY. An Introduction to Popular Metaphysics and its Practical Psychology. By CHARLES WASE. Crown 8vo, cloth, 4s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS.—The Basis of Psychology and Metaphysics. The New Psychology, Suggestion, and the Psychology of Desire. The Ideal Self. The Unconscious Self. Will, Concentration and the Mental Attitudes. Psychology and Education. The Metaphysical Ground. The Practical Ground.

The aim of this book is to help the reader to think and act in harmony with the one infinite and eternally developing Cause with which we are in unity.

THE GREAT INITIATES. Complete Edition of EDOUARD SCHURÉ'S "Les Grands Initiés," with an Introduction to Esoteric Teaching, and a Frontispiece Portrait of the Author. Translated by FRED ROTHWELL, B.A. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 2 vols., 10s. 6d. net
N.B.—Volumes not sold singly.

"Deep learning, a sustained and convincing eloquence, and a penetrating poetry of atmosphere are the distinguishing qualities of 'The Great Initiates,' translated from the French of M. Edouard Schuré by Mr. Fred Rothwell."—*Sunday Times.*

THE BOOK OF THE SIMPLE WAY. By LAOTZE ("The Old Boy"). A New Translation of "The Tao-Teh-King." With Introduction and Commentary by Walter Gorn Old. New Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"Laotze remains a prince among philosophers . . and is still as good reading as he was some five or six centuries B.C."—*Times.*

W. RIDER & SON, LTD., LONDON, E.C.4.